

BOOK REVIEWS

HANDBOOK OF BACTERIOLOGY for Students and Practitioners of Medicine. By Joseph W. Bigger, M.D., Sc.D. (Dublin), F.R.C.P. (London), Professor of Bacteriology and Preventive Medicine, University of Dublin. Sixth Edition. The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1950. \$4.50.

Textbooks such as this that have survived six editions and 12 printings must have substantial merit to have endured so long. The most casual perusal of this very excellent book confirms this impression. Approximately the first half of the book is devoted to techniques for the examination and cultivation of microorganisms, the various antimicrobial substances, the normal flora of human beings and some of their environments, and to a brief discussion of immune phenomena. Of particular value to physicians are the descriptions of methods for the collection of materials from patients, identification of pathogenic bacteria, practical laboratory methods in connection with antibiotics, and a description of the normal flora of the human body.

The last half of the work is devoted to a description of the various microorganisms which cause disease in man. Very little space is devoted to the viruses and Rickettsiae since this is a highly specialized subject requiring techniques not usually available to the hospital laboratory or to the physician. The important bacteria are described concisely and one notes that a vast amount of traditional material pertaining to their properties of growth on a variety of bizarre media has been omitted. There is virtually no attempt to discuss the disease processes caused by the various microorganisms. This greatly strengthens and simplifies the book, and has avoided the many pits into which authors of such texts usually fall.

This textbook is eminently sound and should prove to be exceedingly satisfactory for use as a teaching text in courses of bacteriology. It is not sufficiently detailed to be used as a reference work and therefore can hardly be compared with some of the larger and more complete modern American and English texts. The literary style, as is so often the case in books appearing in England, is superior to that of most American texts, particularly in the basic sciences, and one feels that for this reason it might well attract the student's interest to a greater degree than might one of the many dry and pedantic American works on the same subject.

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS AND THE DEMYELINATING DISEASES. Proceedings of the Association, December 10 and 11, 1948, New York. The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1950. \$12.00.

If one comes away from this book without any very definite conviction regarding the etiology or treatment of the demyelinating diseases, and multiple sclerosis in particular, it is not due to any lack of thoroughness in the handling of the subject. Like all of the research publications of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Diseases, this work brings up to date all the knowledge we have regarding this common neurological condition. It is of primary importance to the practicing neurologist, but the internist and general practitioner may also find it of practical usefulness if they read selected portions. Thus the chapter on the electroencephalogram in multiple sclerosis might well be skipped by all except those devoting themselves largely to this laboratory procedure. It is to be feared that the encyclopedic nature of the work will discourage the clinician from rooting out the more practically important items that lie buried in the mass of detail.

RESEARCH IN MEDICAL SCIENCE. Edited by David E. Green, Ph.D., and W. Eugene Knox, M.D. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1950. \$6.50.

This intensely interesting volume indicates, in a collection of sketches by experts in their subjects, the interdependence of the biologic sciences and the manner in which they are brought to the services of modern scientific medicine. Aside from indicating the logic and techniques of specialists in the various fields into which medicine overlaps, it serves to demonstrate that the physician, who calls upon the specialist for assistance in the solution of his problems, must become acquainted as an amateur in the field of research in which the medical problems presented by his patients fall. The volume presents a series of interesting essays and excursions into the many subjects which should arouse the attention of every modern physician and the undergraduate student of medicine, in order to act as a ferment to stimulate his interests in problems which need exploration.

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DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM—Described for Practitioners and Students. By F. M. R. Walshe, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London. Sixth Edition. The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, Md., 1949. \$5.00.

No better recommendation for this book can be made than that it is now in its sixth edition since 1940. Its popularity is well deserved. It is primarily written for the use of the medical student and general practitioner; and to make a small volume on clinical neurology useful, practical and understandable is no easy task. The author rightly makes no pretense to cover all the fields of his subject and "to multiply the enumeration of those eponymous signs and syndromes by means of which enterprising clinicians stake out their claims as it were upon the human body. All this is a tyranny of words. . . . The emphasis is upon understanding clinical neurology in terms of applied anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, and to understand neurological illness not only as a lesion but as a sequence of events."

The book is divided into two main sections. The first is devoted to general principles of neurological diagnoses and includes a simple, brief description of salient neuroanatomical and neurophysiological facts as they relate to broad neurological syndromes. The second section describes the more common diseases of the nervous system, including space-occupying lesions within the skull such as tumor, hematoma and abscess, vascular disorders of the brain, epilepsy, acute infections of the nervous system, syphilis of the nervous system, affections of the spinal nerves, etc.

The weakest part of the book is in the description of the psychoneuroses, and here the author would have done well to enlist the cooperation of a psychiatrist. The author's differentiation between the so-called hysterical fits and "true" epileptic fits is the usual one that is so frequently encountered in textbooks, but despite this it is equally impossible to make an actual differentiation without long-term observation and electroencephalographic study. The presence or absence of incontinence or tongue-biting, which is mentioned by the author as a differential point, is actually of little important value.

The author may be complimented on the success of his task in presenting on the whole a clear and succinct review of clinical neurology.